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ENGLAND'S ATONEMENT FOR OLD WRONGS

Neither by gifts or loans of money can England solve the Irish question; nor can she solve it by granting Home Rule nor by any constitutional amendment whatever. To remove the age-long differences which still hold the Irish and English people apart, there is needed something which even to-day has not come into being—the spirit of mutual understanding, sympathy, and good-will. A student of Anglo-Irish history will be well aware that there is now a far better and kindlier feeling between the two peoples than has existed for a very long time; but anyone who knows them both cannot but observe that the mental relations between them are still inharmonious and discordant. Ireland is still resentful; England scornful. Ireland still retains the hereditary sentiment of hostility to the English, and sometimes seems to enjoy brooding over the bitter wrongs which she suffered in the past; England looks on the Irish as an “impossible people” and regards her present concessions to them as acts of beatified unselfishness.

Among the wisest people in Ireland are many who, while not denying that their country has been treated with injustice or wishing Irishmen to blot the fact from their memories, yet are strenuously endeavoring to persuade the people to give up their old habit of hating and denouncing England. They perceive that this habit, whatever worse it may do, certainly involves waste of energy and effort which would be better spent to a positive and constructive purpose. A patriot, they point out, should rather try to help his own country than to harm another. For example, at an enthusiastic meeting the other day, some excited soul shouted, “To hell with England!” A prominent member of the Gaelic League at once leaped to his feet and—“No!” he cried; “to heaven with Ireland!” But in England, though the old belief that the Irish were an inferior race has been tempered, it is not extinct. An Irishman who enjoys the intimacy of English people and discovers their opinions on the matter, will be forced to note a prevalent sentiment that the Irish are an unreasonable and obstreperous community

whom the English have treated with extraordinary patience and generosity. The British regard Ireland, indeed, somewhat as a dog would a bundle of fireworks tied to his tail, and consider it a brilliant but undesirable appendage. It may be that an Englishman does not mean by this attitude in any way to alienate or to give pain to Irish susceptibilities; but such a result is unavoidable. An assumption of superiority is never ingratiating; and in this case its effect is the more marked because an Irishman, knowing the history of his country—a history which for three centuries at least has been a narrative of spoliation and massacre by the English, and desperate reprisals by the natives—is moved with natural and proper indignation when he sees those who outraged his country now blandly booking down upon her as a dependant and a beggar.

The time has come when a new spirit of sympathy and goodwill should take the place of ancient distrust, and a permanent foundation be thereby laid in the souls of men for a complete settlement of the Irish question. To this end nothing is more needed than a thoughtful and balanced presentation of the facts of history. At the present time the record of the relations between the two countries is known to Irishmen from the Irish point of view; and when thus told, it presents truly such a spectacle of blood and tears, of savage passion and inhuman cruelty, as makes the heart sicken and the blood boil. The Englishman, on the other hand, is, as a rule, complacently ignorant of the whole story. For the mutual interests of the two people a popular statement of the events of this history, set forth in just perspective, is therefore desirable. Mr. J. P. Gannon's is perhaps the most thoughtful epitome of the subject; but it is not very light reading. Mr. Joyce's well-known *Child's History* gives the facts briefly but does not trace their causes. Mr. Lecky prefixed to his *Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* a summary of its previous history. There are two other works on the subject, but none which is at the same time concise and philosophic. But if a satisfactory book on Anglo-Irish relations is not yet obtainable, it is easy to acquaint oneself with the facts of the case and to form a judgment which shall be substantially accurate.

One important secret of Ireland's history is to be found in her geographical position. She lies apart from Europe, a distant outpost in the western sea. Movements that convulsed the civilized world did not extend to her. Barbarian hordes and Mohammedan armies might sweep across the Continent, modifying faiths and overwhelming empires; kingdoms might come and go; dynasties might rise and reign and sink again into oblivion; one system of government and of philosophy might supplant another; and of all this scarce an echo reach the Irish shore. The Roman never set foot in Ireland; the Norman never conquered it; no Renaissance, no Reformation nor Counter-Reformation is found in Irish history; invaders came, but they brought with them nothing but their swords; and, from the eighth century to the sixteenth, Ireland, in her solitude across the estranging channel, lived her own lonely life unstirred by those currents which so profoundly moved the nations of the rest of Europe.

The strange and unique record of her relations with England may, speaking roughly, be divided into two periods. The one is that of subjugation; the other, of self-assertion. The one of conquest; the other, of re-conquest. In one half we find the inhabitants of the country driven off or killed in order to make room for settlers from Great Britain, till the native population is humbled to the dust and every desirable portion of the island is in the hands of the foreigner. In the other half, which begins with the eighteenth century, the tide turns. Slowly, through agitations rather than through armed revolt, the masses rise against their masters, win demand after demand, and at last in our own day beat out of the field their former conquerors and even secure from England a recognition of their national rights.

The first period is one of invasions and settlements. Early in the ninth century corsairs from Denmark and the North attacked the island. The famous Brian Boru prevented them from overrunning the country, but they succeeded in establishing themselves permanently in the coast towns. Later, the Pope gave to Henry II by a Papal Bull the right to take possession of Ireland. Some Normans from Wales and England sailed across the channel and, having easily defeated the disunited

and untrained natives, took for their own the rich plains of the east, centre, and south and settled down in the island. They introduced into the parts over which they held sway somewhat of the feudal system, but their allegiance to the King soon became nominal and they ruled in their domains as independent princes. In the rest of the country the Celts still continued their primitive way of life and maintained the old tribal system which divided them into a hundred warring units. Two peoples alien in race, history, and civilization had now halved Ireland between them and the possibility of her becoming the home of a united nation was indefinitely postponed. In the rest of Europe the feudal system was now passing away. England, Spain, and France found their nationality and developed each a strong centralized government. But Ireland, failing to do so, fell behind in her development and for long years remained at odds with the civilized world.

For some centuries Ireland lived to herself, forming no new connections and in her own condition making little change or progress. It was the tumults which attended the Reformation that drew her for the first time into the full current of world politics. Her entrance was significant, and boded ill for the happiness of her relations with the neighbor island. In the religious cleavage of the time she was obliged, like England, to choose with which party she would ally herself. It was inevitable that the Irish, an intuitive and spiritual people, devoutly attached to their religion and unstirred by the intellectual development of the time, should choose the Old Church. England, on the other hand, chose the New; and ever since, there has lain in the religious differences of the two countries a ground of misunderstanding and antagonism. But Ireland's loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church in this crisis meant far more than a profession of her creed. In those days the ecclesiastical and the political were inter-dependent and Ireland's action marked her as the natural ally of a military power at feud with Protestant England. The first appearance of Ireland upon the stage of foreign politics was an invitation to the champions of the Papacy to help her against their common foe, the English people.

Henry VIII was not the king to leave open at his gates this easy avenue for papal attack. He sent over an army which won all the victories it pleased. He thought he had conquered the country and, having secured the submission of the Irish chieftains, made what was, on the basis of the facts as he knew them, a wise settlement. But he did not realize, and the Irish leaders did not tell him, that in their promises on behalf of their people they had exceeded their powers. They were not feudal lords, as Henry imagined, but merely tribal chiefs. They could not make war or peace at their own pleasure, nor swear away the tribe lands; and the members of the tribes did not approve of the surrender to Henry nor intend to be bound by it. The settlement, therefore, was foredoomed to failure. But if the war had not effected the purpose of the English, it had at least revealed to them a new and unexpected opportunity for personal profit. They found they need not cross the Atlantic to seek their fortunes in a dangerous wilderness, but could win near by in Ireland estates which seemed to them more rich and fair than those of the New World. Nothing but an occasion was wanting for them to go in and take the land from those who owned it.

Ireland's position was ominous. She was weak; she was the friend of England's enemies; and she had that in her possession which the English coveted. The temptation offered to England was great; would she be able to resist it and deal justly by her neighbor?

As early as 1547 the first Plantation was made, when some districts in what are now King's and Queen's counties were taken from the natives and given to an Englishman. Thus was inaugurated a system which was to play a large part in the subsequent history of Ireland. A Plantation, as it was called, involved the conquest of a district, the expulsion of the old inhabitants, and the selling of the soil to British "undertakers," rich individuals or corporations, who were to let their property to English or Scotch occupiers.

It was not till the reign of Elizabeth that a settlement of this kind was made on a large scale. In this crisis England stood face to face with the Papal world in arms; she was wrestling for

her existence, and the odds were all against her. The Irish had revolted and were intriguing with Spain; and England, being in no mood to be scrupulous in her methods or merciful to her foes, let loose upon them the full force of her fear and rage.

In all the sad history of Ireland there is nothing quite so terrible as these Elizabethan wars. The ferocity with which the English suppressed the native race "surpassed that of Alva in the Netherlands," writes Lecky, "and has seldom been exceeded in the page of history." In describing the character of these wars I shall quote from Lecky's *History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, because the recital is likely to be so strange and unwelcome to English ears that they would hardly deem it credible save on the authority of one whose honesty and judgment they have learned to trust.

"The war," writes Lecky, "as conducted by Carew, by Gilbert, by Pelham, by Montjoy, was literally a war of extermination. The slaughter of Irishmen was looked upon as literally a slaughter of the wild beasts. Not only the men, but even the women and children who fell into the hands of the English, were deliberately and systematically butchered. Bands of soldiers traversed great tracts of country, slaying every living thing they met. The sword was not found sufficiently expeditious but another method proved much more efficacious. Year after year, over a great part of Ireland, all means of human subsistence were destroyed, no quarter was given to prisoners who surrendered, and the whole population was skilfully and steadily starved to death. The pictures of the condition of Ireland at this time are as terrible as anything in human history. Thus Spenser, describing what he had seen in Munster, tells how 'out of every corner of the woods and glens, they came creeping forth upon their hands, for their limbs could not bear them. They looked like anatomies of death; they spoke like ghosts crying out of their graves; they did eat the dead carrion, happy when they could find them; yea, and one another soon after, in as much as the very carcases they spared not to scrape out of their graves.'" (pp. 5-6.)

And again Lecky writes of the same war, (pp. 7-8): "Archbishop Usher afterwards described how women were accustomed

to lie in wait for a passing rider, and to rush out like famished wolves to kill and devour his horse. The slaughter of women as well as of men, of unresisting peasants as well as of armed rebels, was openly avowed by the English commanders. The Irish annalists told, with horrible details, how the bands of Pelham and Ormond 'killed blind and feeble men, women, boys and girls, sick persons, idiots and old people;' how in Desmond's country, even after all resistance had ceased, soldiers forced men and women into old barns which were set on fire, and if any attempted to escape they were shot or stabbed; how soldiers were seen 'to take up infants on the point of their spears, and to whirl them about in their agony;' how women were found 'hanging on trees with their children at their breasts, strangled with their mother's hair.' . . . It needs indeed the widest stretch of historic charity to judge this history with equity or moderation."

As soon as these wars were ended, the scheme of Plantation was carried out. Large tracts in the southern province of Munster were confiscated and offered to Englishmen at the price of from two to three pence an acre. Among the "undertakers" (as they were called) who took land and settled down on their estates, were Sir Walter Raleigh, whose house in Youghal is still to be seen, and Edmund Spenser. It had been at first intended to exclude the native Irish altogether from the escheated parts, but in practice this could not be done, and many of the old inhabitants remained as tenants and underlings of their conquerors.

In the time of James I, a local rebellion in the north was made the occasion for the settlement of Ulster. There was little reason for this confiscation. Its motive was not political expediency nor yet racial antipathy, but simply that spirit of commercial greed which marked the English court and the English "Interests" of that time.

The highest opinions were held of the value of Irish land. "I had rather labour with my hands," said the Lord Deputy, "in the Plantation of Ulster than dance or play in that of Virginia." The Lord Chancellor stated that the scheme of American colonization was as different from this Irish enterprise "as

Amadis de Gaul from Cæsar's Commentaries." Bacon was much interested in this plan of settlement, and was anxious that the mistakes made in America should not be repeated here. He warned the Government against sending over broken down gentlemen as "planters." He wished that more should be done to encourage the growth of towns and fortified posts, and that under-tenancies should be discouraged for fear the natives should be permitted to continue in their holdings and thus remain as a lasting menace to their landlords. His advice was good, and had it been taken, the Ulster Rebellion of thirty years later might have been avoided. Six counties were escheated, giving in all upwards of half a million acres of profitable land for distribution. One-tenth of this was assigned as property to the natives, the rest of whom lived chiefly as dependants on the settlers, without legal interest in the land on which they lived. More than one-fifth was given to the Established Church, and more than two-fifths to Scotch and English undertakers. The English who came over were not quite of the right kind, being plain country gentlemen who had not much money and lacked the spirit of enterprise. The Scotch were fully as poor, but they brought with them more followers and succeeded in persuading the natives to work for them by promising to let them live on in their old homes as tenants. Mr. Bagwell quotes a contemporary statement to the effect that the Irish were ready to do anything to avoid "removing from the place of their birth and education, hoping at one time or other to find an opportunity to cut their landlords' throats."

It was not long before the dispossessed natives entered into a general conspiracy to regain the land and to expel the undertakers. On an appointed day, October 23rd, 1641, the Ulster Irish rose. Two months later a great number of the Catholic gentry of the rest of the island, being persuaded that it was England's intention to extirpate Catholicism, joined the rebels. Several thousand Protestants were massacred in various parts of the country, with circumstances of horrible ferocity; and the retaliation by the English was as savage in its character as the original crimes, and fell alike upon the guilty and the innocent. The rebellion was protracted for years, till Cromwell's cam-

paign in 1649 and 1650 broke the native resistance. Lecky writes as follows of the condition of Ireland in 1652 when the war was over:

“According to the calculation of Sir W. Petty, out of a population of 1,466,000, 616,000 had in 11 years perished by the sword, by plague, or by famine artificially produced. . . . A third part of the population had been thus blotted out, and Petty tells us that according to some calculations the number of the victims was much greater. Human food had been so successfully destroyed that Ireland, which had been one of the great pasture countries of Europe, was obliged to import cattle from Wales for consumption in Dublin. . . . Famine and the sword had so done their work that in some districts the traveller rode twenty or thirty miles without seeing one trace of human life, and fierce wolves—rendered doubly savage by feeding on human flesh—multiplied with startling rapidity through the deserted land, and might be seen prowling in numbers within a few miles of Dublin. . . . Slave dealers were let loose upon the land, and many hundreds of boys and of marriageable girls, guilty of no offence whatever, were torn away from their country, shipped to Barbadoes, and sold as slaves to the planters.”

As far back as March, 1642, the English Government had by a formal act decided what they would do with the Irish lands which they intended to confiscate. In fifteen counties property was to be assigned to certain speculators called Adventurers who had advanced money to the Government. But the Plantation that was actually carried out after the war was much more thorough than this. As Clarendon said at the time, “Ireland was the great capital out of which all debts were paid, all services rewarded, and all acts of bounty performed.” The Act of Satisfaction of 1653 provided that all landed proprietors, all who had taken part in the rebellion, and all who had given any support or countenance to the rebels during the first year of the war should be transplanted to those bleak and desolate regions of the west which nature has doomed to a perpetual poverty. Three counties were reserved by the Government, and the rest of the island was divided between the British

soldiers, whose pay was greatly in arrears, and the Adventurers. By this enactment practically the whole of the Irish race was excluded from thirty-one of the thirty-four counties of its native land, and relegated to the wilds of Mayo, Galway, and Clare. In the English vernacular of the time, "Hell or Connaught" was the alternative offered them. It proved impossible to carry out this transaction thoroughly, but a long file of immigrants, largely citizens and merchants, Anglo-Norman landowners and gentry, bringing with them their wives and families, crossed the Shannon during the early months of 1654. There were permitted to remain behind only peasants whose aid in tilling the earth was found necessary by the new settlers.

Once again the Irish espoused the losing cause in a crisis, and rallied round the banner of James II. They were defeated, and again Irish lands—this time a million acres—were confiscated in the interests of the victors.

In a hundred years Ireland had seen three confiscations; much land had been confiscated twice, some three times. "When the eighteenth century dawned, the great majority of the former leaders were either sunk in abject poverty or scattered as exiles over Europe; the last spasm of resistance had ceased, and the long period of Protestant ascendancy had begun."

It is at this point, about the year 1700, that the relations between England and Ireland enter on a new phase. There are no more fierce wars of decimation, no more invasions of alien planters, no more wholesale expulsions of Irish families from their homes. Ireland begins to enjoy what might, by comparison, be called peace, and to move up the difficult path of self-development and progress. During this epoch there comes, too, a great change of mind and conscience over England. The humiliations of the American war and the loss of her colonies had a beneficent effect in chastening her spirit and ridding her of a narrow selfishness. Towards the end of the eighteenth century she begins to evince a sympathy with the weak and oppressed, and her relations with her dependants assume a new character.

The inhabitants of the country were at this time divided into three distinct classes. The most numerous of these consisted of

the Catholics, who were the sole occupiers of Connaught and were distributed through the rest of the island as the dependants of the colonists. The second class was composed of the Presbyterians, who lived in Ulster and were under disabilities similar to those of the Catholics. The third class, the Party of the Ascendancy, held Ireland in trust for England, and though only a fraction of the total population, were the rulers of the masses and the masters of the soil. Their position was not without danger; and for their better security against the people, and also as a protection against that Papal aggression of which England ever lived in fear, a strict penal code was passed against all who were not members of the Established Church. Under it, the great majority of the Irish people were disfranchised, forbidden many of the most ordinary rights of citizenship, and practically denied the privilege of education. Severe, however, as this code seems to us, it is humane when judged by the standards of those days; and, largely owing to the generosity of the colonists, it was at no time strictly enforced.

The chief event in Ireland's external history during this century was the contest between the Party of the Ascendancy and the mother country, and the extraordinary success of the Anglo-Irish in winning their demands. At the beginning of this period they suffered the common disabilities of every colony in those times. They were not allowed to carry on any commerce which might in any way conflict with the trade of the mother country. The export of cattle and pigs had been a flourishing business, but through the influence of English merchants it was by law rigidly restricted. In its place a business in sheep and wool was created; but when this began to thrive, it, too, suffered the same virtual prohibition. A like treatment was meted out to the export of all commodities by which English profits were threatened. In addition to all this, the Government of Ireland was under English control, and the general position of the colony was one of subordination and inferiority. The colonists were not likely to continue willingly in any such relations to their mother country. They struggled vigorously to better their condition, and after forcing the withdrawal of commercial restrictions they achieved their greatest

success in 1782 when, under the leadership of Henry Grattan, they won for themselves the legislative and judicial independence of Ireland.

But while the Anglo-Irish colony was thus battling with its mother country, it was itself being attacked in the rear. The masses began to rise and to struggle for a redress of their grievances. About the middle of the century the discontent takes shape in widespread conspiracies and the formation of popular societies. The first of these was the Whiteboys, which became so strong that for some years it practically superseded the law of the land in many parts of Ireland. The leaders fixed the amount of the tithes and of the rents to be paid for the peasants' holdings; they broke up grazing lands with the plow, levelled enclosures, and forced jails. They compelled obedience to their decrees by intimidation and the last extremes of violence. This organization was followed by that of the Oakboys (1763) and the Steelboys (1771) of Ulster, and several others. In 1791 was founded a society of a very different order, the United Irishmen. This was inspired by Wolfe Tone, and its ideals have had a strong effect on the minds of Irishmen which lasts to this day. Tone's object was the winning of the natural rights of a democracy, and in order to achieve this end he sought to persuade his countrymen to rise above sectional differences and unite as one people to enforce their common claims against the party of privilege. About this time the Presbyterians of the North were aroused by the example of the popular revolution in France, and their excitement quickly spread among the Catholics. The discontent took fire, and there broke out the rebellion of 1798. This ill-concerted and abortive rising gave the English government an excuse for depriving Ireland of her separate Parliament, and in 1801 was passed the Act of Union. The progress of the masses was not stopped. Already they had obtained the remission of the Penal Code, and the remission of their other religious disabilities followed. In 1829 under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell was secured Catholic Emancipation. In 1869 the Church of Ireland was disestablished and the Church of the people put on a level with that of the gentry. Then began a yet more fierce

and desperate encounter—the struggle of the land. Backed by the sympathy and the gold of their kinsmen in America, the people set to work to win back from the Anglo-Irish colony the soil of which they had been deprived by force centuries before. The Fenian organization was succeeded by that of the Land League. The power of this league owing to its thoroughness and its unity was tremendous. Through it there was formed a combination against rents which was enforced by a system of persecution and outrage. The landlords and their party could make no headway against the storm. In the hour of danger and need they turned for help to their kinsmen and allies in England. But circumstances had changed. Instead of coming to their assistance, the English trained the heavy guns of government upon them and joined forces with the people. For years the unequal contest was prolonged, but when at last it closed, the masses had won that for which they fought and the peasant was in possession of the soil. To-day the Party of the Ascendancy, as such, does not exist, and is represented only by those old families who lived on in their inherited homes, shorn of their ancient wealth and power though still distinguished by the lingering light of a glory that is set.

Such is, in outline, the story of Anglo-Irish relations. A summary cannot have that realism and vividness which only detail can give; but even this slight epitome will show that the wrongs of Ireland are not imaginary nor her discontent unnatural. There is little in the narrative which the English can read without sorrow or regret; little indeed to justify them in an attitude of self-righteous condescension.

Once this attitude is known to be without warrant of history, it would seem that there is only one thing for an honest and manly nation to do; to abandon it. When this has been accomplished, and Englishmen have acquired a spirit of sympathy and good-will toward Ireland, they will have done their part to establish that sense of fellowship between the two peoples on which, and on which alone, a permanent adjustment of Anglo-Irish difficulties can ever be based.

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